

Message Text

SECRET

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ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /026 W
----- 021656

O 022000Z JUN 75

FM AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 0354

S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 4 SAN JOSE 2226

STADIS////////////////////////////////////

EXDIS

FROM AMBASSADOR TODMAN FOR ARA/CEN LAZAR ONLY

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1

TAGS: PGOV, CS

SUBJECT: COSTA RICAN CONSTITUTIONAL CRISIS

1. I REGRET THAT DUE TO POOR POUCH SCHEDULE I MUST REPLY
TO YOUR MAY 8 LETTER BY CABLE (TO BE SENT ON MONDAY) SO
THAT YOU WILL HAVE THIS BEFORE I ARRIVE FOR CONSULTATIONS.

2. I HAVE BEEN PREOCCUPIED WITH THE GROWING SIGNS OF TENSION
AND DIFFERENCES BETWEEN ODUBER AND FIGUERES SINCE I
ARRIVED IN SAN JOSE, AND THE TELEGRAMS REPORTING MY RECENT
CONVERSATIONS WITH THE TWO ONLY ADD TO MY CONCERN. THE
QUESTIONS YOU POSE IN YOUR LETTER OF MAY 8 ARE THE GUT ONES
TO ANSWER IN ASSESSING CORRECTLY THE RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN
THE FORCES ALLIED WITH FIGUERES ON ONE HAND AND THE ODUBER
GOVERNMENT ON THE OTHER. I AM NOT SATISFIED THAT WE HAVE
ALL THE INGREDIENT ELEMENTS CLEARLY ENOUGH IN VIEW TO ALLOW
US TO FORMULATE OPERATIONAL ANSWERS WITH CERTAINTY AND WILL
PROBABLY NEVER HAVE. NEVERTHELESS, SOME ASPECTS DO STAND
OUT FOR USEFUL ANALYSIS.

3. IN THE FIRST PLACE, IT DOES NOT LOOK TO ME LIKE WE ARE
DEALING WITH A POLITICAL PHENOMENON CLEARLY ANCHORED IN
EITHER THE EXTREME RIGHT OR THE EXTREME LEFT, ALTHOUGH I

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HAVE NO DOUBT THAT EITHER OR BOTH WOULD JOIN IN VIGOROUSLY

TO EXPLOIT A DETERIORATING SITUATION OR IN THE EVENT OF AN OPEN FIGHT. THE MAJOR SOURCE OF THE DISCONTENT AND FRUSTRATION THAT IS PROMOTING DIFFERENCES BETWEEN FIGUERES AND ODUBER IS COMING FROM THE MIDDLE RIGHT SIDE OF THE POLITICAL SPECTRUM. THIS SECTOR HAS TRADITIONALLY BEEN THE MAINSTREAM IN COSTA RICAN POLITICS AND IS THE SECTOR IN WHICH FIGUERES HAS HISTORICALLY FOUND HIS SUPPORT. EVEN BACK IN 1948, YOU WILL RECALL, FIGUERES MOBILIZED HIS SUPPORT FROM THE BUSINESS SECTOR AND THE MANY SMALL LAND-OWNING PEASANTS (AS OPPOSED TO THE AGRICULTURAL WORKERS) WHEN HE OVERTHREW CALDERON GUARDIA FOR HIS COLLABORATION WITH THE COMMUNISTS. THE BUSINESS SECTOR AND A MAJORITY PORTION OF THE MIDDLE AND UPPER CLASSES ARE NOW ANGRY AND AFRAID OF THE DIRECTIONS THAT THEY BELIEVE ODUBER IS EITHER TAKING THE COUNTRY OR IS TOLERATING. FIGUERES' PUBLIC AND PRIVATE RESPONSIVENESS TO THEIR CONCERNS AND THE FACT THAT BUSINESSMEN AND LARGE LANDOWNERS ARE NOW SEEKING HIM OUT FOR POLITICAL RELIEF STRONGLY INDICATE THAT HE IS STILL IDENTIFIED WITH THESE GROUPS. ADD TO THIS A STEADILY GROWING AND INCREASINGLY VOCAL AND ACTIVIST EXTREME LEFT INFLUENCE IN THE UNIONS AND UNIVERSITIES, PLUS DON PEPE'S RESTLESSNESS AT NOT BEING ABLE TO INFLUENCE THE COURSE OF GOVERNMENT AS FULLY AS HE WOULD LIKE WHILE REALIZING THAT HIS ADVANCING AGE PERMITS HIM LITTLE TIME TO DO WHAT HE HAS TO DO, AND A FORMULA THAT STRIKINGLY RESEMBLES COSTA RICAN POLITICS AFTER WORLD WAR II IS AGAIN TAKING FORM.

4. PEPE'S RESTLESSNESS IS UNDOUBTEDLY IN LARGE PART STIMULATED BY HIS CLOSEST ASSOCIATES WHO INCLUDE LUIS BURSTIN, HUMBERTO PACHECO, FERNANDO BATALLA, GASTON KOGAN, CARLOS MANUEL VINCENTE AND CHALO FACIO, ALL OF WHOM ARE AND HAVE BEEN AT THE CENTER OF FIGUERES INNER CIRCLE AND DISTRUSTFUL OF DANIEL ODUBER. ALL OF THEIR POLITICAL OR ECONOMIC FUTURES DEPEND IMPORTANTLY UPON FIGUERES STAYING IN THE CENTER OF THE POLITICAL ARENA. FACIO AND BURSTIN SEEM TO HAVE FIGUERES' EAR MORE THAN THE OTHERS; FACIO BECAUSE HE NEEDS FIGUERES IN ORDER TO STAY IN GOVERNMENT AND PURSUE HIS PRESIDENTIAL AMBITIONS AND BURSTIN BECAUSE THE EX-PRESIDENT IS THE CONDUIT THROUGH WHOM HE EXERCISES POWER.

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TM PART OF FIGUERES' WILLINGNESS TO ALLY HIMSELF WITH THE CONSERVATIVE SECTORS DESCRIBED ABOVE RELATES TO HIS OWN SELF-PERCEPTION AS A BUSINESSMAN, PART COMES FROM THE SATISFACTION HE GAINS FROM BEING SOUGHT OUT FOR LEADERSHIP AND PART AS NOTED ABOVE IS DUE TO HIS SENSE OF FRUSTRATION WITH NOT BEING POSITIVELY ABLE TO INFLUENCE THE GOVERNMENT, DESPITE HIS PERSONAL INFLUENCE OVER ODUBER, NOW THAT THE ODUBER LOYALISTS HAVE TAKEN OVER THE GOVERNMENT MACHINERY.

THIS IS ANOTHER WAY OF SAYING THAT FIGUERES IS FRUSTRATED WITH DANIEL, BECAUSE EXECUTIVE LEADERSHIP HAS BEEN UNABLE OR INEFFECTIVE IN CONTROLLING THE BUREAUCRACY. FIGUERES MAY EXERT INFLUENCE OVER ODUBER, BUT THE GOVERNMENT MACHINERY INSTALLED BY ODUBER (THE PLN) IS QUITE ANOTHER THING. THUS PEPE HAS BEEN GIVING SERIOUS THOUGHT TO THE IDEA OF A PRE-EMPTIVE COUP AND/OR A CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY MECHANISM THAT COULD CHANGE THE STRUCTURE OF GOVERNMENT TO MAKE IT MORE RESPONSIVE TO ODUBER'S (AND FIGUERES') LEADERSHIP.

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FM AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 0355

S E C R E T SECTION 2 OF 4 SAN JOSE 2226

STADIS//////////

EXDIS

FROM AMBASSADOR TODMAN FOR ARA/CEN LAZAR ONLY

A KEY GOVERNMENT MINISTER AND INTIMATE OF ODUBER UNDERLINED TO THE EMBASSY LAST WEEK HOW IMPORTANT IT IS TO ODUBER THAT THE USG NOT PRESS TOO HARD FOR MEASURES THAT WOULD FACILITATE VESCO'S EXTRADITION. THIS MINISTER OPENLY WONDERED IF THE CIA COULD NOT SOMEHOW SPIRIT VESCO OUT OF THE COUNTRY IN A WAY THAT WOULD NOT COMPLICATE MATTERS FOR ODUBER. HE WENT ON TO POINT OUT THAT ODUBER COULD NOT AFFORD TO MOVE AGGRESSIVELY AGAINST VESCO BECAUSE PEPE HAS CONSIDERABLE INFORMATION ABOUT VESCO'S INVOLVEMENT WITH THE PLN AND KEY COSTA RICAN POLITICAL LEADERS THAT ODUBER IS AFRAID FIGUERES COULD USE AGAINST HIM. REPORTEDLY, THE PRESIDENT BELIEVES DISCLOSURE OF THIS INFORMATION WOULD DESTROY THE PARTY AND HIS GOVERNMENT. AS FIGUERES DOES NOT SHARE ODUBER'S RESPECT FOR THE PARTY HE WOULD NOT BE RELUCTANT TO USE THE VESCO BLACKMAIL

TO DAMAGE ODUBER.

7. THERE IS NO DOUBT THAT ODUBER IS FEELING PRESSURE FROM FIGUERES TO INTERRUPT THE CONSTITUTIONAL PROCESS AND MANY OBSERVERS HAVE GRAVE DOUBTS THAT ODUBER HAS THE STRENGTH OF CHARACTER OR CAN MOBILIZE SUFFICIENT POLITICAL FORCE TO THWART A CHALLENGE IF FIGUERES REALLY THROWS DOWN THE GLOVE. ODUBER'S ENTIRE POLITICAL CAREER HAS BEEN ONE OF PLAYING SECOND TO FIGUERES. HE HAS ALWAYS BEEN THE LOYAL PARTY MAN
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WHO WORKED EFFICIENTLY AND EFFECTIVELY IN THE SHADOW OF FIGUERES WHILE ADVANCING THE SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC DOCTRINE UPON WHICH THE RANK AND FILE PLN PRIDES ITSELF. ODUBER AND THOSE AROUND HIM HAVE SERVED TO ATTRACT INTELLECTUALS TO THE PLN RANKS, HAVE CAREFULLY BUILT AN INSTITUTIONALIZED PARTY STRUCTURE AND HAVE PROVIDED DOCTRINAL FLESH TO THE PARTY'S POLITICAL BONES. ODUBER'S POLITICAL REPUTATION GREW AND HE WAS SUCCESSFUL SO LONG AS FIGUERES WAS THE UNDISPUTED AND UNCHALLENGED LEADER AND SO LONG AS ODUBER COULD OPERATE UNDER THE MANTLE OF FIGUERES' CHARISMA AND UNDOUBTED MASS APPEAL. (PLN AND OPPOSITION LEADERS ALIKE AGREE THAT FIGUERES WOULD WIN IN 1978 BY MORE THAN 65 PERCENT OF THE VOTE IF HE WERE TO RUN AGAIN.) WE SHOULD NOT DELUDE OURSELVES INTO THINKING THAT FIGUERES SHARES DEEPLY THE PRINCIPLES OF THE SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC DOCTRINE THAT ODUBER'S ADMINISTRATION AND BUREAUCRACY HAVE TAKEN STEPS TOWARD IMPLEMENTING.

8. I SUBMIT, DAVE, THAT THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE TWO MEN HAS NOT FUNDAMENTALLY CHANGED FROM WHAT IT HAS ALWAYS BEEN; ONE WHERE ODUBER IS THE JUNIOR PARTNER, ALTHOUGH ONE WITH MUCH ENHANCED POWER IN HIS OWN RIGHT SINCE GAINING THE PRESIDENCY. ODUBER AND HIS GOVERNMENT, WITH THE EXCEPTION OF FACIO AND A COUPLE OF OTHERS THAT FIGUERES IMPOSED UPON HIM, ARE CLEARLY MOVING TOWARD IMPLEMENTING THE PARTY'S DOCTRINE AS SPELLED OUT IN THE PATIO DE AGUA FORMULATION. FIGUERES ACQUIESCED IN THIS DOCTRINE AS LONG AS HE HAD A FREE HAND TO SET THE COURSE OF GOVERNMENT, BUT NOW PERCEIVES HIMSELF POWERLESS TO MOVE THE MACHINERY AND CORRECT THE COURSE HE BELIEVES IS BEING TAKEN. ODUBER, NEVER ONE TO CHALLENGE FIGUERES FRONTALLY, AND NOTWITHSTANDING HIS PRESIDENTIAL POWER, STILL PERCEIVES HIMSELF IN A RELATIVELY WEAK POSITION POLITICALLY AGAINST FIGUERES AND IS PROBABLY SEEKING CHIPS THAT WILL HELP HIM TO ALTER THE RELATIONSHIP WITHOUT PERSONALLY TAKING THE INITIATIVE. A STRONG WORD FROM THE USG TO FIGUERES THUS MIGHT JUST SERVE ODUBER'S POLITICAL PURPOSES WHILE IMPORTANTLY HELPING TO PRESERVE COSTA RICA'S TRADITIONAL CONSTITUTIONAL PROCESSES.

9. IN A CONFLICT SITUATION WITH FIGUERES, ODUBER HAS ALWAYS MOLLIFIED DON PEPE ALTHOUGH THE TWO ARE KNOWN TO HAVE
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HAD FREQUENT DIFFERENCES, MAINLY OVER POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY. NOW WHETHER ODUBER WOULD HAND OVER THE PRESIDENCY UPON DEMAND FROM FIGUERES IS THE CRITICAL QUESTION. THE BETTING IN THE EMBASSY IS THAT ODUBER WOULD YIELD EVEN THOUGH FIGUERES MIGHT HAVE TO BRING CONSIDERABLE PRESSURE, INCLUDING INDICATIONS OF TORRIJOS' SUPPORT AND THREATS TO EXPOSE ODUBER'S VESCO INVOLVEMENT TO FORCE HIM TO IT. THE FEELING IS THAT HE WOULD NOT PLUNGE THE COUNTRY INTO A CIVIL WAR OVER DIFFERENCES WITH FIGUERES WHICH HE COULD NOT WIN IF EVENTS WERE TO UNFOLD IN A WAY THAT ODUBER WAS INCAPABLE OF HALTING. HOW THE NON-PLN OPPOSITION WOULD ALIGN ITSELF IN THE HYPOTHETICAL EVENT OF OPEN CONFLICT BETWEEN THE TWO IS PROBABLY FAIRLY EASY TO PREDICT GIVEN THE CURRENT DIVISIONS IN THE OPPOSITION. THE FAR LEFT WOULD SUPPORT ODUBER AND THE PRESERVATION OF THE DEMOCRATIC PROCESS BECAUSE THE PLN IS A KNOWN QUANTITY OF CERTAIN VALUE TO THEM. THE CONSERVATIVE OPPOSITION, CHAMBERS OF COMMERCE, ETC., WOULD VIEW THEIR INTERESTS BETTER SERVED WITH FIGUERES ALTHOUGH MANY WOULD REGRET THE FAILURE OF DEMOCRATIC PROCESSES, AND THE FAR RIGHT, FEARFUL OF ODUBER'S POLICIES WOULD ALSO BACK FIGUERES.

10. ODUBER CERTAINLY UNDERSTANDS THAT THE VESCO ISSUE HAS DONE HIM AND HIS GOVERNMENT NO GOOD WITH THE UNITED STATES. HE MAY SUSPECT THAT THE UNITED STATES BELIEVES HE HAS COLLABORATED WITH FIGUERES TO MAKE VESCO'S EXTRADITION MORE DIFFICULT. HE ALSO KNOWS THAT HE NEEDS THE GOOD WILLPTF THE UNITED STATES FOR BOTH DOMESTIC AND EXTERNAL REASONS. IN ORDER FOR ODUBER TO ASSURE HIMSELF OF USG SYMPATHY AND UNEQUIVOCAL SUPPORT, HE PROBABLY BELIEVES THAT HE NEEDS TO CREATE AN IMAGE OF NO IDENTIFICATION WITH VESCO AND SIMULTANEOUSLY TAG THE VESCO CONNECTION EXCLUSIVELY TO FIGUERES.

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ACTION SS-25

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FM AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 0356

S E C R E T SECTION 3 OF 4 SAN JOSE 2226

STADIS////////////////////////////////////

EXDIS

FROM AMBASSADOR TODMAN FOR ARA/CEN LAZAR ONLY

11. IF, IN FACT, ODUBER IS LOOKING AROUND FOR HELP ONE CANNOT BUT WONDER WHAT KIND OF AID HE EXPECTS FROM US THAT WOULD DO HIM ANY GOOD. I THINK ODUBER IS SOPHISTICATED ENOUGH TO KNOW THAT THE U.S. WILL NOT KNOWINGLY ENGAGE ITSELF ON EITHER SIDE IN AN INTERNAL POLITICAL STRUGGLE WITHIN THE RULES BETWEEN HIMSELF AND FIGUERES. DESPITE FREQUENT MEETINGS BETWEEN ODUBER AND TORRIJOS, I AM SURE ODUBER KNOWS THAT TORRIJOS IS A STAUNCH POLITICAL AND BUSINESS FRIEND OF FIGUERES AND BOTH OF THEM SHARE A MUTUAL ADMIRATION AS WELL AS COMPATIBLE POLITICAL IDEAS. THUS ODUBER CAN PROBABLY EXPECT, IN THE EVENT TORRIJOS IS FORCED TO CHOOSE SIDES, NO SOLACE FROM THE IMMEDIATE SOUTH. WITHOUT MANIFEST EXTERNAL SUPPORT AGAINST FIGUERES AND WITH DEBILITATED INTERNAL POLITICAL SUPPORT, ODUBER'S RELATIONSHIP WITH FIGUERES IS UNEASY. I CAN ONLY CONCLUDE THAT ODUBER IS DEEPLY AFRAID OF WHAT MAY HAPPEN TO HIM IN A CONFRONTATION WITH FIGUERES AND THIS FEAR IS LEADING HIM TO BEHAVE INDISCREETLY AS REFLECTED IN HIS REPORTED CONVERSATION WITH TORRIJOS.

12. A MORE SERIOUS CONCERN TO ME IS THAT ODUBER WHILE SHOWING SOME SLIGHT IMPROVEMENTS DOES NOT YET SEEM ABLE TO FIRMLY DIRECT HIS GOVERNMENT AND THIS, IN TURN, STIMULATES THE FRUSTRATIONS OF THOSE WHO WANT MORE DECISIVE ACTION, NATURALLY FAVORABLE TO THEIR SPECIAL INTERESTS. IT IS A CASE
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WHERE ODUBER IS TRYING TO BE ON GOOD TERMS WITH ALL AND IS ENDING UP ON GOOD TERMS WITH NONE. OF COURSE, THIS IS PRECISELY FIGUERES' COMPLAINT -- THAT THE GOVERNMENT IS UNRESPONSIVE AND UNDIRECTED -- AND THE GREATER THE PERCEPTION GROWS THAT THIS IS THE BASIC PROBLEM WITH THE GOVERNMENT, THE STRONGER WILL BE FIGUERES' ARGUMENT FOR A CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY OR OTHER ACTION THAT HE BELIEVES WILL CORRECT THE GOVERNMENT'S DRIFT.

13. AS I HAVE SAID, I HAVE NO EVIDENCE THAT A CIVIL WAR IS IMMINENT IN COSTA RICA DESPITE ALL THE GENUINE PROBLEMS EXISTING BETWEEN THE TWO LEADERS AND THE UNQUESTIONED SOCIAL TURMOIL IN SOME PARTS OF THE SOCIETY. YOU KNOW MANY OF THE STORIES ABOUT THE PRIVATE ARMIES AND ARMED GROUPS ON BEHALF OF ONE PERSON OR ANOTHER. THE APPARENT DISAPPEARANCE FROM THE GOVERNMENT'S ARSENALS OF A LARGE AMOUNT OF WEAPONS DURING THE LAST MONTHS OF THE FIGUERES' ADMINISTRATION, JOSE MARTI FIGUERES' REPUTED 1,000 MEN IN TRAINING, MARIO CHARPENTIER'S FORMATION OF AN ELITE FORCE, AND THE LATEST ABOUT THE PLN MAKING PREPARATION TO ARM MANY OF ITS YOUTHFUL ADHERENTS -- ALL THESE STORIES REFLECT THE MOOD OF REAL FEAR AND HOSTILITY GRIPPING SOME SECTORS. ALL THIS MAY WELL RELATE TO THE ODUBER ADMINISTRATION'S URGENT REQUEST FOR WEAPONS, ALTHOUGH IF THERE IS A CONNECTION I AM CONVINCED IT IS NOT FOR THE PURPOSE OF MAKING A PRE-EMPTIVE COUP, BUT TO SHOW STRENGTH THAT WILL GIVE PAUSE TO ANYONE OR ANY GROUP THAT MIGHT BE NOURISHING IDEAS OF OVERTHROWING THE GOVERNMENT.

14. SHOULD EVENTS MOVE FIGUERES TO EXERCISE HIS POWERS THE MOST LIKELY DEVICE WILL BE THROUGH THE FORMATION OF A CONSTITUENTE, WHICH CAN BE CLOAKED WITH THE LEGALITY OF THE CONSTITUTION. IF THAT HAPPENS AND AN "INTERRUPTION" OF CONSTITUTIONAL GOVERNMENT ACCOMPANIES IT, THERE WOULD PROBABLY NOT BE AN OVERWHELMINGLY POPULAR REACTION IN SUPPORT OF ODUBER, ALTHOUGH MANY WOULD WRING THEIR HANDS THAT THE PRESIDENT MADE IT NECESSARY FOR FIGUERES TO STEP IN TO CORRECT THE COUNTRY'S ILLS AND MORE WOULD BE UPSET WITH THE LOSS OF COSTA RICA'S REPUTATION FOR POSSESSING A SOLID, VIABLE DEMOCRATIC STRUCTURE. COSTA RICA'S INTERNATIONAL REPUTATION WOULD UNDOUBTEDLY SUFFER AS IT IS STILL HIGHLY REGARDED AS ONE OF THE FEW FUNCTIONING DEMOCRACIES IN
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LATIN AMERICA DESPITE THE TARNISH INTRODUCED WITH ROBERT VESCO.

15. WE HAVE HEARD SOME REPORTS RECENTLY THAT FACIO HAS BEEN ESTRANGED FROM FIGUERES OVER THE DIVORCE OF THEIR CHILDREN. WE PLACE LITTLE CREDENCE IN THESE REPORTS AS WE TEND TO BELIEVE THAT THE LONGSTANDING PERSONAL AND BUSINESS LINKS BETWEEN THE TWO ARE STRONG AND HEALTHY. FACIO IS IN THE ODUBER CABINET BECAUSE FIGUERES PUT HIM THERE, NOT BECAUSE ODUBER WANTED HIM, AND FACIO'S PRESIDENTIAL ASPIRATIONS DEPEND MIGHTILY UPON FIGUERES. THERE IS ALSO LITTLE DOUBT THAT FACIO STILL HAS A HAND IN VESCO'S LEGAL AND BUSINESS AFFAIRS IN COSTA RICA. A PART OF FACIO'S ROLE IN GOVERNMENT IS PROBABLY TO LOOK AFTER FIGUERES' INTERESTS WHICH HAVE FREQUENTLY RELATED TO VESCO, AS WELL AS TO KEEP FACIO'S POLITICAL

ASPIRATIONS ALIVE. IN SUM, FACIO IS STILL PROBABLY PLAYING FIGUERES' GAME (BUT SEE SEPTTEL ON MY LATEST TALK WITH FACIO). THERE IS EVEN A POSSIBILITY THAT FIGUERES PERCEIVES FACIO AS A LIKELY INTERIM PRESIDENT EMERGING FROM A CONSTITUENTE IN THE EVENT ODUBER WILL NOT PLAY ALONG. ODUBER HAS CHARGED THAT FACIO PROBABLY HAS BEEN TRYING TO PLAY HIM AND FIGUERES OFF AGAINST EACH OTHER TO ADVANCE FACIO.

16. AT ANOTHER POINT IN YOUR LETTER YOU SUGGEST THAT ODUBER MAY BE LOOKING FOR AN EXCUSE TO MOVE PRE-EMPTIVELY AGAINST FIGUERES. THIS WOULD GREATLY SURPRISE ME AS I HAVE INDICATED ABOVE. SUCH A MOVE BY ODUBER RUNS CONTRARY TO MY AND THE EMBASSY'S ASSESSMENT OF ODUBER'S CHARACTER AND THE PSYCHOLOGICAL CONDITIONING THAT HE HAS UNDERGONE OVER THE MANY YEARS IN FIGUERES' SHADOW. HIS STYLE WOULD RATHER BE TO MANUEVER, PROMISE, INTRIGUE OR ANYTHING TO KEEP TAKING A FORCEFUL INITIATIVE.

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ACTION SS-25

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FM AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 0357

S E C R E T SECTION 4 OF 4 SAN JOSE 2226

STADIS////////////////////////////////////

EXDIS

FROM AMBASSADOR TODMAN FOR ARA/CEN LAZAR ONLY

17. THE VESCO FACTOR IN THIS IS PUZZLING AND INTRIGUING, BUT I DO NOT THINK ODUBER WILL RISK A CONFRONTATION OVER VESCO UNLESS U.S. PRESSURE IS INTOLERABLE FOR HIM. THERE IS A FEELING IN THE EMBASSY THAT ODUBER WILL SEEK TO DELAY AND EVENTUALLY AVOID PLACING HIMSELF IN A POSITION WHERE HE HAS TO ANTE UP ON THE VESCO ISSUE UNTIL HE HAS ABSOLUTELY NO OTHER CHOICES OPEN TO HIM. PERSONALLY, I THINK

HE WILL COOPERATE AS LONG AS AND TO THE EXTENT THAT HE CAN MAKE SURE THAT HIS HAND DOES NOT SHOW OPENLY AND THAT HE CAN CLAIM HE HAD NO CHOICE. DESPITE VESCO'S UNPOPULARITY, IN A CONFRONTATION ODUBER COULD NOT EXPECT TO ATTRACT ENOUGH POPULAR SUPPORT TO SUSTAIN A DIRECT CHALLENGE TO FIGUERES. AN EARLY TEST ON THIS POINT COULD COME AS EARLY AS THE END OF JUNE IF THE LEGISLATIVE LEADERSHIP HAS REFUSED TO ALLOW AN OPPOSITION MOTION TO BE CONSIDERED THAT WOULD RAISE THE PRIORITY OF THE LEGISLATION. (THE BILL IS NOW NUMBER 12 IN A LIST OF 52 ITEMS ON THE AGENDA. LAST FALL THE BILL WAS NUMBER 2 AND THE PLN LEADERSHIP SAW TO IT THAT THE DEBATE ON THE BILL WAS SO ENSNARED IN PARLIAMENTARY MANUEVERS THAT SERIOUS CONSIDERATION OF IT NEVER RESULTED.) WITHOUT APPROVAL OF THE OPPOSITION MOTION THE REFORM BILL WILL NOT LIKELY REACH DEBATE UNTIL SEPTEMBER OR OCTOBER AND IT MAY THEN RECEIVE THE SAME TREATMENT THAT IT GOT LAST YEAR. THE EXTENT TO WHICH ODUBER PERMITS HIS DEPUTIES TO COOPERATE IN MOVING
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THE DECISION ALONG TO ALLOW EARLY DEBATE OR, FAILING THAT, HOW THE LEADERSHIP PERFORMS WHEN THE BILL COMES UP NORMALLY, WILL PROVIDE A USEFUL LINE ON ODUBER'S TACTICS IN CHALLENGING FIGUERES.

18. LET ME TRY TO RESPOND TO YOUR THOUGHTS DEALING WITH CONTINGENCY PLANNING. THE REACTION OF THE EMBASSY OLDTIMERS TO AN OVERT FIGUERES-INSPIRED GOLPE IS THAT THE COUNTRY WOULD NOT DIVIDE IN TWO PARTS FOR A CIVIL WAR, ALTHOUGH THERE WOULD BE A PERIOD OF HIGH TENSION AND PROBABLY SOME VIOLENCE, SINCE ODUBER WOULD NOT LEAD AN ARMED RESISTANCE. ARMED RESISTANCE. IT IS SUGGESTED THAT THE MORE LIKELY SCENARIO WOULD BE A GRADUALLY INTENSIFIED WAR OF NERVES AGAINST ODUBER BY FIGUERES AND ASSOCIATES, THE END OF WHICH WOULD COME THROUGH THE FORMULATION OF A CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY WHICH WOULD BE AGREED TO BY ADUBER AND WOULD ALLOW AN INTERIM OR EVEN CONTINUING GOVERNMENT, PROBABLY HEADED BY ODUBER. FIGUERES WOULD ASSUME A KEY ROLE IN RUNNING THE GOVERNMENT UNTIL CERTAIN STRUCTURAL CHANGES IN THE GOVERNMENTAL MACHINERY AND CONGRESS ARE WORKED OUT. IN OTHER WORDS, ANOTHER 1949 PERIOD. I DO NOT COMPLETELY RULE OUT SUCH A DEVELOPMENT WITH ODUBER CLAIMING THAT IT WAS THE ONLY WAY TO AVOID TEARING THE COUNTRY AND THE PARTY APART. HOWEVER, I AM NOT AS CONVINCED AS OTHERS.

19. WITH REGARD TO U.S. ACTION IN ALL THIS, LET'S FIRST PUT SOMOZA RIGHT OUT OF OUR MINDS. BETTER FIGUERES BY GOLPE DE ESTADO THAN INTERVENTION BY SOMOZA AND THE INEVITABLY ENSUING FLAP ABOUT A U.S. PUPPET HAVING HIS STRINGS PULLED. TORRIJOS MAY TURN OUT TO BE PART OF FIGUERES' WAR OF NERVES AGAINST ODUBER. IF WE ARE GOING TO MAKE CONTINGENCY PLANS,

LET'S THINK IN TERMS OF MEDIATORS WHILE BEARING IN MIND
THAT FIGUERES WILL BE MOVING TO CHANGE
THE DEMOCRATIC SYSTEM OF GOVERNMENT PRECISELY BECAUSE
HE THINKS IT HAS WORKED NEITHER HERE NOR IN THE UNITED
STATES. HE DOES RESPECT OUR POWER, HOWEVER.

20. JUST A LAST FOOTNOTE. COSTA RICA HAS LIVED FOR
27 YEARS AS A MODEL DEMOCRATIC SYSTEM AND ITS INTERNATIONAL
REPUTATION AS A RESULT HAS BEEN OF THE HIGHEST ORDER.
WHAT IS OFTEN FORGOTTEN IS THAT FIGUERES WANTED IT THAT WAY
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BECAUSE IT SUITED HIM. NOW THAT THE AFFAIRS OF STATE ARE
GETTING AWAY FROM HIM THERE ARE SIGNS THAT HE DOES NOT WANT
IT THAT WAY ANY LONGER. I AM UNCERTAIN WHETHER ODUBER
WILL BE ABLE TO SERIOUSLY DISPUTE HIM IF HE INSISTS AND
PRESSURES FOR A CHANGE. IF NOT, IT WOULD BE A TRAGEDY FOR
US ALL.
LANE

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